PARANORMAL UNDERGROUND®

Volume 19, Issue 2 February 2026

TOBY SELLS
Southern Storytelling Meets the Supernatural

A UFO Encounter in Council Bluffs

HAUNTED GATLINBURG
Spirits of the Smokies

PARANORMAL THEORIES THAT REFUSE TO DIE

Paranormal Encounters:
THE ORB IN THE NURSERY

ALSO INSIDE:

Haunted Objects: Possession or Projection?
Mythical Beings That Still Haunt Our Imagination
The Veil of Forgetting: Why Souls Forget Between Lives
Soundbites, Secrecy & the UAP Paper Trail

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about all things

SPIRITUAL & SUPERNATURAL

With ...

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Psychic Intuitive & Paranormal Researcher

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Author & Energy Healer

TUNE IN TODAY ON ITUNES, SPOTIFY & MORE!

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She is an experiencer and a member of both MUFON and CE-5, and she also served as a consultant for Thomas Conwell's *They Are Here: Central U.S. UFOs and Earthquakes and UFOs*. Cheryl is an author of eight books — including *Edge of Darkness*, *Chosen*, and *Dimensions: Mysterious Triangles of the U.S.*, and she is the co-author of *Digging Into Skinwalker Ranch* and *The Basin Files: Skinwalker Ranch*.

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Her magazine experience includes roles as senior and managing editor for several niche publications and online media, where she has overseen editorial direction, content development, and investigative features. With a lifelong passion for the unexplained, Cheryl has personally experienced a wide range of paranormal phenomena, fueling her dedication to research and storytelling in the field.

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Known as an esoteric detective, Paul has been reading and studying the unknown since he was a young boy. He has been to over 59 countries to document the paranormal.

Paul worked for military intelligence from 1979 to 1986 and saw several top-secret UFO photographs, making him very interested in extraterrestrials. He is a journalist for the *Costa Rican Times*, and his articles cover metaphysical topics and paranormal investigative stories. He is also co-owner of Halo Paranormal Investigations.

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Corey is a paranormal enthusiast who has investigated at The Queen Mary, The Queen Anne

Hotel, Hotel Alex Johnson, and The Whaley House. He has personally encountered paranormal phenomena, including seeing ghostly apparitions and UFOs and is most interested in trying to solve the mysteries of the paranormal.

His passion for discovery fuels his fascination with the unknown, from haunted history to modern unexplained events. Corey approaches investigation with an open mind and a genuine desire to understand the forces that lie beyond ordinary experience.

CHAD WILSON

Chad is co-creator and publisher of *Paranormal Underground* magazine and co-producer of *Paranormal Underground Radio*. His interest in the paranormal led to the creation of ParanormalUnderground.net, a platform dedicated to exploring unexplained phenomena, investigative research, and personal encounters.

Chad has investigated with East Tennessee Paranormal Research Society and counts Waverly Hills Sanatorium, the Villisca Axe Murder House, Bobby Mackey's Music World, the Queen Mary, Queen Anne Hotel, Hotel Alex Johnson, Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, and private residences among his investigations.

His passion for the field extends to documenting firsthand experiences and sharing them through in-depth articles, interviews, and multimedia projects. He advocates for open-minded inquiry and collaboration within the paranormal community.

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Special Editor's Letter

By Cheryl Knight-Wilson

Earlier this month, we lost our friend and honorary Science Editor, J.D. Harrison. Chad and I met J.D. in an online paranormal forum, a place where those searching for answers to the unexplained would talk late into the night about hauntings, anomalous experiences, history, theory, and everything in between. What started as casual discussion quickly turned into real friendship. Many of us became close, but J.D. stood out.

He wasn't the loudest voice in the room. He didn't rush to conclusions. As an archaeologist by trade — and yes, J.D. was a pseudonym he preferred in order to keep his professional and paranormal worlds separate — he brought a steady, disciplined perspective. He approached the unexplained not from belief or disbelief, but from inquiry. He asked grounded questions. He offered historical context. He listened carefully before speaking. And when he did speak, it mattered.

J.D. quickly became part of the *Paranormal Underground* family. He signed on as our Science Editor and wrote articles in our very first issue of the magazine, under the pseudonym Binoo'mukua. He helped shape the magazine's foundation.

Even when life inevitably pulled us in different directions — as it does for all of us at times — his presence never truly left. We kept him in our staff box because his influence remained embedded in the magazine's DNA, and because, in many ways, it felt wrong to imagine it without him there.

J.D. was serious, but he was also quietly witty, with a sense of humor that would catch you off guard at just the right moment. Chad spent hours in deep conversation with J.D. about paranormal theory and their shared desire to move the field forward responsibly and intelligently.

In recent years, our conversations were less frequent, but we still exchanged occasional emails — simple check-ins, brief hellos, the kind of notes that quietly remind you a friendship is still there and never forgotten. J.D. will be missed in ways that can't be measured. He will always be part of this magazine — and part of our family. ◆

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‘HAINT BLUES’

WHERE SOUTHERN STORYTELLING MEETS THE SUPERNATURAL

By Cheryl Knight-Wilson

Ghost stories in the American South tend to linger. They’re passed down on porches, preserved in courthouse archives, and retold with equal parts memory and imagination.

In his book *Haint Blues: Strange Tales From the American South*, veteran journalist Toby Sells brings a reporter’s discipline to those traditions, blending documented history with the region’s unmistakable storytelling voice. The book moves comfortably between folklore and fact, treating each tale with curiosity rather than judgment.

Sells approaches the paranormal not as a debunker or a believer, but as a journalist who understands that stories can be meaningful whether or not they’re provable. Drawing from newspaper archives, oral histories, and long-standing local legends, he explores Southern strangeness in all its forms — from phantom women in small Alabama towns to UFO encounters met with humor instead of hysteria.

In this Q&A, Sells reflects on journalism, folklore, and the challenge of honoring stories that are “real” — whether or not they’re true.

* * * * *

Q: What first inspired you to merge your reporter’s instincts with the South’s rich storytelling tradition in *Haint Blues*?

Toby: I love the South. I love news; its critical writing and research. I love paranormal stories. *Haint Blues* really married all of these.

For it, you really have to operate on a bunch of different levels. I grew up on the South’s amazing storytelling traditions, listening to my dad jaw with his buddies knowing the precise truth was not the point of the story in progress. My journalism training and practice demands I find the truth, and I’m duty-bound to report it.

Veteran journalist Toby Sells blends investigative rigor with a lifelong love of folklore to explore the paranormal through a reporter’s lens.

Q: You describe the book as tasting "like sweet tea or biscuits and gravy." How did you strike that balance between solid research and good Southern storytelling?

Toby: Veracity in the paranormal is especially fleeting. But the stories are compelling (and just amazing). So, reporter me found the best information I could (often from newspaper archives). Southern storyteller me decided my duty was really to those stories.

So, I didn't try to prove or disprove anything. I didn't have to. I didn't want to. The stories stand on their own. As I always say about *Haint Blues*, these stories are real. That don't make 'em true. But they are delicious.

Q: Many of the tales in *Haint Blues* come from deep within local archives and oral histories. Was there a particular story that surprised you the most once you began digging into its origins?

Toby: Huggin' Molly from Abbeville, Alabama. Easy. I had never heard the Huggin' Molly legend before *Haint Blues*. Not bragging at all — but that's rare. I'm a nerd/stan about Southern tales and paranormal lore.

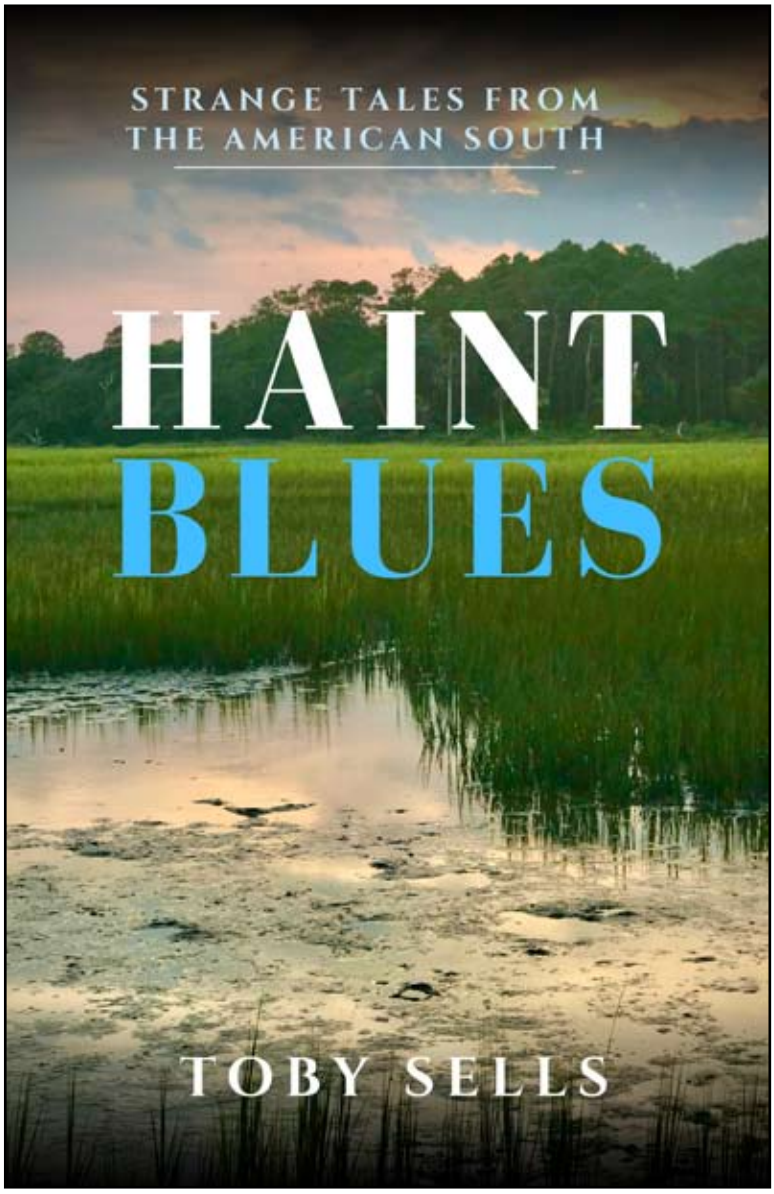
Huggin' Molly is a generations-old story in Abbeville, and it's wild. A tall, phantom woman (or a witch or something) haunts the streets. If she catches children out past dark, she hugs them tight and screams in their ear. It's unique as far as paranormal stories go.

What I love is that Abbeville celebrates this. They have "Home to Huggin' Molly" on their welcome sign and a restaurant Downtown called, you guessed it, Huggin' Molly's.

Q: The South has no shortage of ghost stories — from the Bell Witch to haunted plantations. What, in your view, makes Southern hauntings distinct from those in other parts of the country?

Toby: History tends to make a good ghost story. There's plenty of that in the South, and Southerners revel in it.

History, too, tends to decide the temperaments of Southern ghosts, malevolent or benevolent. The Gray Man of Pawley's Island, South Carolina, was a good guy in life. So, in death he's helpful, warning the living of oncoming hurricanes. The ruthless and headless pirate skeleton that haunts Biloxi Bay's Deer Island is terrifying.



"Haint Blues" gathers Southern ghost stories, legends, and strange encounters, grounding them in archival research while honoring the region's rich storytelling tradition.

Q: You include everything from UFO abductions to swamp monsters. What connects all these "strange tales" under the same Southern umbrella?

Toby: Southern reactions connect these stories. Eyebrows raised when Betty and Barney Hill said they were abducted by aliens on the road between Vermont and New Hampshire. When Calvin Parker and Charley Hickson said they were abducted near Pascagoula, Mississippi, locals threw boozy UFO parties warning that any alien that messed with them would get the business end of a shotgun.

→

"Strange Weekly" is Toby's YouTube news show dedicated exclusively to paranormal headlines, curating the most compelling and credible supernatural stories from around the world each week.

We often fight fear with brazen humor down here. Even Andrew Jackson jokingly taunted The Bell Witch when his carriage got stuck on the way to the Bell Farm.

Q: As a veteran reporter, how did your investigative background shape the way you approached folklore and the paranormal — especially when separating myth from history?

Toby: I started with the notion that I would never truly know the truth behind any of this. But as we say in the South, we don't let truth get in the way of a good story.

I did my best, though, to sift through history for the most and best truth I could find. So, I'd discard information (no matter how well it fit the story I was telling) if I could not trust the source. Twenty-five years in newspapers hasn't made me rich. But it has sharpened my smell test on credibility.

So, I relied mainly on sources as close to the ground as I could get my hands on — old books, oral histories, and especially old newspaper stories.

Q: Some stories in the book are eerie, but others have a touch of humor or humanity. How important was it to capture that emotional range in your retellings?

Toby: This is where Southern storytelling shines. They say, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Who cares if two fishermen get abducted by aliens? It's intriguing, maybe. It's aliens after all. But when you make them real, the story becomes compelling and just humane. When they have jobs like you have. When they get scared. When they worry what others will think of them.

It was my job to treat these people and their stories right in *Haint Blues*. They aren't characters acting out plots (maybe). The reader cares more, too, if they know these people and that goes beyond just emotional stakes.

Q: If you could invite one legendary Southern ghost, monster, or folk figure to sit down for an interview, who would it be — and what would you most want to ask them?

Toby: I'd go for the wildest — The Bell Witch. The entity was so powerful, so strange, and so believable to hundreds of people who experienced it. I'd have a million questions, but they'd all go vaguely to, "What are you about?"

I'm also a proud, native Tennessean. I grew up in up on The Bell Witch. So, I gotta go with the hometown gal.

Q: Do you have any new projects coming up?

Toby: I have doubled down on my love of news and the paranormal. I launched *Strange Weekly* at the beginning of the year. It is — as far as I can tell, and I could be wrong — the very first weekly news YouTube channel that focuses solely on the paranormal.

For the show, I gather news from the week from agencies all over the world and bring them together in one place. I sincerely start researching topics for each episode with paranormal fans in mind. I want the most compelling, most interesting, and newest stories I can find. Again, I gather them from trusted news sources from agencies and companies you know, like *The New York Times*, *The Associated Press*, and more.

I'm seven episodes in. So far, there's been haunted houses on and off the real estate market, a UAP Task Force under review in Vermont, a Chicago conference on near-death experiences, exorcism claims at a New Zealand boarding school, moves in the Slender Man case, and more.

* * * * *

Find out more about Toby at his website and YouTube channel, and make sure to check out Haint Blues. ◆

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Haunted Objects

Possession, Projection or Pattern Recognition?

By Chad Wilson

There's something uniquely unsettling about a haunted house — but a haunted object? That feels personal.

A chair can be avoided. A room can be closed off. But a doll sitting upright on a shelf, a ring that won't stay lost, a mirror that seems to hold more than reflection — those follow you. They move through spaces with you. They cross thresholds.

And for centuries, people have insisted that certain objects carry something with them.

The question is: What?

Objects don't breathe, think, or intend. Yet, when something shifts around them — when the air feels charged, when behavior changes, when unease settles in without invitation — we instinctively look to the thing itself. We want a container for the anomaly. We want edges around the mystery.

The Weight of Story

Haunted objects aren't new. Folklore across cultures tells of cursed jewelry, spirit-bound tools, protective talismans that turn dangerous when misused. In Europe, "dybbuk boxes" entered modern paranormal vocabulary as containers said to trap restless spirits. In the American South, heirlooms have been whispered about for generations — not as spectacle, but as fact.

What makes objects different from locations is portability. A house is rooted, but an object travels. When strange activity follows the object instead of the address, the narrative tightens. The cause appears contained.

Investigators often report patterns: Activity intensifies near the object. Electrical interference clusters around it. Witnesses experience emotional shifts when touching it. Some describe nausea, sudden sadness, intrusive thoughts.

But here's the tension — objects also carry memory. Not spiritual memory necessarily, but human memory.

Grief. Attachment. Trauma. A wedding ring worn through decades of marriage doesn't need a ghost to feel heavy.

Sometimes the history itself becomes part of the phenomenon. An object passed through multiple hands accumulates stories, and those stories shape how the next owner encounters it. By the time it reaches an investigator's table, the narrative may be as charged as the artifact. The line between inherited legend and fresh experience blurs.

Possession: When Something Attaches

Within paranormal belief systems, haunted objects are sometimes described as "attachment vessels." The theory suggests that a spirit, fragment of consciousness, or residual energy anchors itself to a physical item.

Reality is not always the same thing as proof.

In cases involving alleged possession, patterns often include repeated misplacement, unexplained temperature changes, tactile sensations, and recurring dreams tied to the object's history. Museums dedicated to paranormal artifacts carefully isolate certain items, claiming activity decreases when boundaries are respected.

Skeptics point out that expectation plays a powerful role. Tell someone an object is haunted, and their perception shifts. Every creak becomes signal. Every shadow becomes presence.

But even seasoned investigators admit there are cases that resist easy dismissal and situations where multiple witnesses report consistent experiences without prior suggestion.

Is that evidence of attachment? Or something else?

Projection: The Human Imprint

There's another possibility. One less supernatural but no less profound.

Humans project. We assign personality to cars. We talk to plants. We feel guilt donating clothing. Objects become extensions of identity. Psychologists call it the "extended self" theory: We embed pieces of ourselves into what we own.

In traumatic circumstances — sudden death, conflict, unresolved emotion — objects associated with those moments can become emotional flashpoints. The mind, searching for continuity, may externalize internal states. An object becomes the container for grief.

That doesn't make the experience imaginary. It makes it deeply human.

Sleep researchers note that many reports of haunted-object activity occur at night — during transitional states between waking and dreaming. In those liminal hours, the brain is exquisitely skilled at filling gaps with narrative.

A doll's eyes shift because the brain expects symmetry. A mirror seems to ripple because peripheral vision is unreliable in low light. Pattern recognition, which is an evolutionary survival tool, may be doing what it does best: finding meaning in ambiguity.

Pattern Recognition: The Brain at Work

We are wired to detect patterns. Early humans who mistook wind for a predator survived longer than those who ignored rustling entirely. The cost of false positives was lower than the cost of missed threats.

→

That wiring remains. When an object is introduced as "haunted," the brain begins scanning for anomalies. Random events cluster into perceived sequences. Confirmation bias reinforces the narrative. A dropped item becomes a sign.

Technology doesn't necessarily help. EVP recordings, EMF meters, and digital anomalies can amplify pattern-seeking. Static becomes voice. Data spikes become presence.

Yet, some cases resist tidy neurological explanation. There may be multiple witnesses, independent accounts, and consistent phenomena across time. Even researchers who approach with caution sometimes encounter patterns they cannot immediately categorize.

Which raises the uncomfortable possibility that projection and pattern recognition may not account for everything.

There's also the social factor. When two or three people share an experience, even a subtle one, the validation compounds. One person mentions feeling watched. Another admits to a headache. A third recalls a dream. Soon, the object sits at the center of a shared narrative. The experience becomes communal, and that collective reinforcement can be powerful — whether the source is psychological, environmental, or something we don't yet understand.

The Edgy Middle Ground

What if haunted objects aren't exclusively possessed — or purely projected? What if they function as catalysts?

An object may act as a focal point for memory, emotion, and attention. In concentrated psychological states, unusual experiences can cluster. That doesn't automatically imply spirits. It does suggest interaction between environment, expectation, and perception.

In parapsychology, some theorists propose that human consciousness itself may imprint on physical matter under intense emotional conditions. Not a wandering ghost — but a residue of experience. A recording rather than a resident.

Some investigators describe this as an echo effect — not an entity acting with intention, but an imprint that replays under the right conditions. Intense emotion, repeated focus, even ritualized attention may amplify that echo. Whether psychological or parapsychological, the object becomes a stage. The question shifts from "Who is inside it?" to "What was left behind?"

If that theory holds even partially true, haunted objects may represent intersections: where story, psychology and unexplained variables overlap.

Why They Endure

Haunted objects persist in culture because they shrink the mystery to something tangible. A house is overwhelming. An object can be held, boxed, Sold. Or it can refuse to leave. Whether the explanation is possession, projection, or pattern recognition, one fact remains: People experience something around certain objects that feels real. And reality — as any seasoned investigator will tell you — is not always the same thing as proof.

Perhaps the most honest stance is neither blind belief nor immediate dismissal. It's curiosity without surrender.

An object sits quietly on a shelf. It does nothing. Until someone notices it. And that may be where the haunting truly begins. ◆

THE LINEUP

We keep it creepy.

Whether it's **the latest Stephen King book**, a collection of **under-the-radar horror movies**, or an **unsolved case** that's **still haunting us** 50 years later, we're dying to share our latest dark obsessions with fellow enthusiasts.

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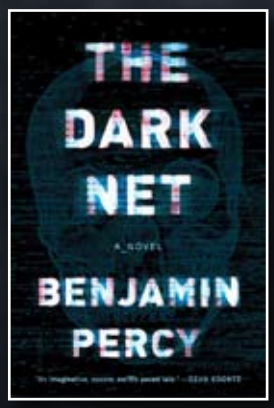

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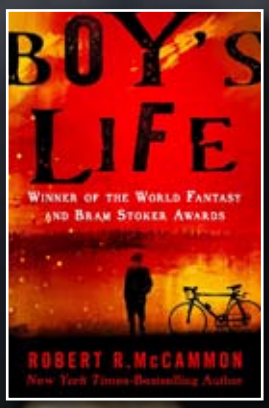

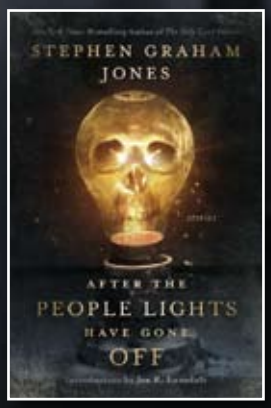

HAUNTED GATLINBURG
Spirits of the Smokies

By Paul Dale Roberts, Halo Paranormal Investigations

Gatlinburg, Tennessee, has long carried a reputation for being one of the most haunted towns in the Smokies. Tucked against the Great Smoky Mountains, this tourist destination is known not only for its scenic beauty, but also for persistent ghost stories tied to its historic locations.

Among the most talked-about paranormal hot spots are White Oak Flats Cemetery, the Gatlinburg Inn, the Greenbrier Restaurant, the Edgewater Hotel, and even stretches of the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail.

Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail

Along the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, visitors have reported seeing full-bodied apparitions walking the wooded path. One recurring figure is known locally as the "Irish Logger."

Witnesses describe a red-haired man with a full beard and mustache, wearing an unbuttoned red plaid shirt and blue jeans, carrying what appears to be a log. He walks steadily up the trail — and then vanishes without a trace.

White Oak Flats Cemetery

Established in 1830, White Oak Flats Cemetery is Gatlinburg's oldest burial ground. Nestled near the Smoky Mountains, it contains the graves of many early settlers, along with a number of unmarked plots.

Visitors have reported shadowy figures, unexplained whispers carried on the wind, and apparitions standing silently among the headstones. Some describe an overwhelming sense of restless energy.

The cemetery's survival during the devastating 2016 wildfires is viewed by many locals as nothing short of miraculous, adding another layer to its mystique.

Gatlinburg Inn

The Historic Gatlinburg Inn is frequently mentioned in paranormal circles. Guests and staff have reported disembodied footsteps, unexplained chills,

White Oak Flats Cemetery, founded in 1830, is known for shadowy figures, whispered voices, and an atmosphere many say feels unsettled.

faucets turning on by themselves, and shadow figures in hallways. One local psychic once claimed that a female spirit revealed herself as "Sassy Sally," described as a woman who met a tragic end after being strangled by a client. Other accounts suggest the presence of the hotel's original founder, R.L. Maples Sr.

Room 11 has developed a darker reputation, with some visitors describing an oppressive or negative energy there. Reports also include ghostly teenagers, strange activity near the pool area, and unexplained odors.

→

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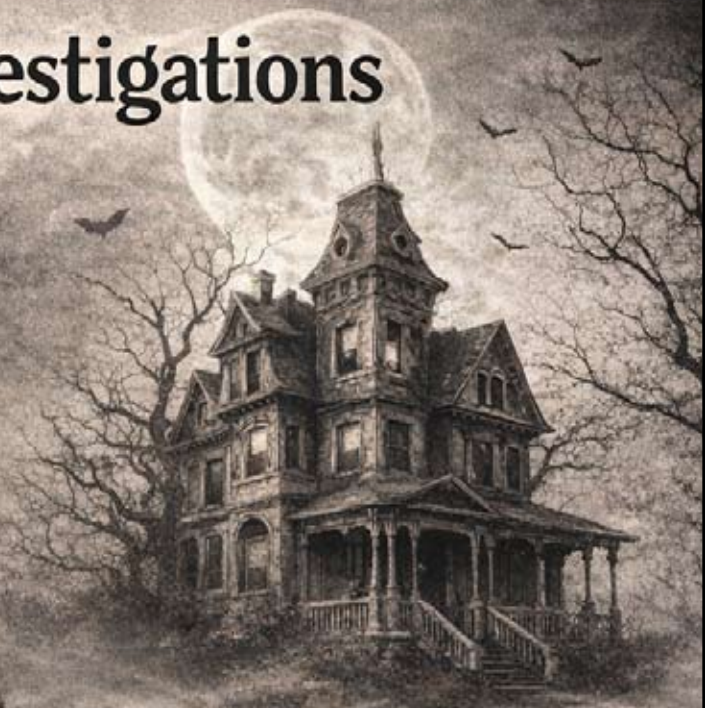

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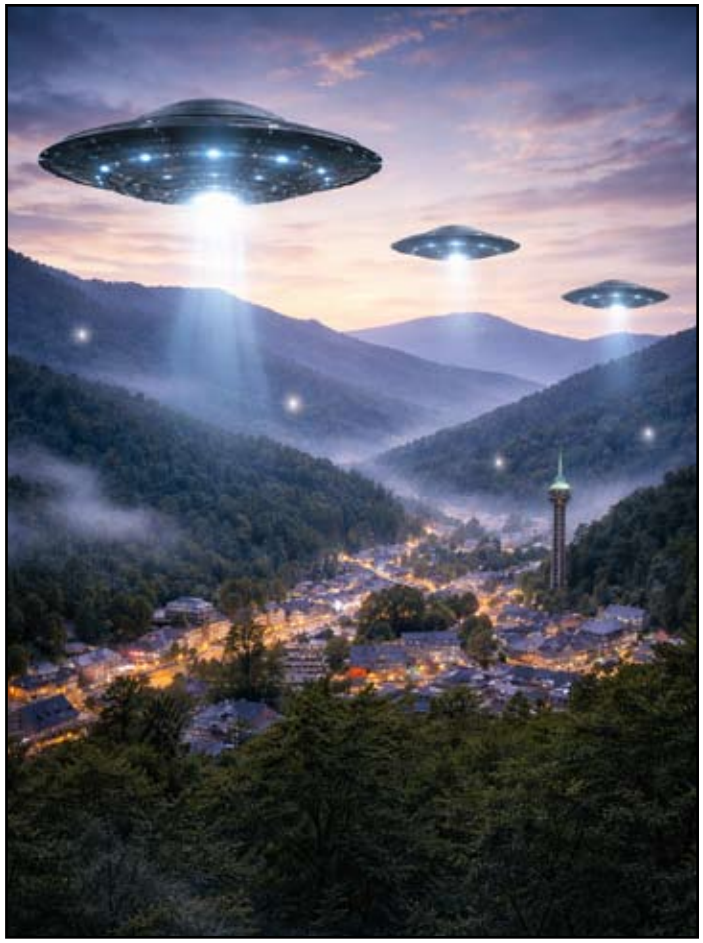

Reports of UFOs over the Great Smoky Mountains have surfaced for decades, with witnesses describing unusual light formations, hovering craft, and fast-moving objects streaking across the night sky.

Greenbrier Restaurant

The Greenbrier Restaurant, once a lodge, is widely associated with the spirit of "Lydia," often called the Ghost Bride. According to local legend, Lydia was left at the altar and later hanged herself inside the building.

Witnesses describe seeing a petite woman in white, particularly on the staircase. Guests report cold spots, crying sounds, and the phrase "Mark my grave" whispered in empty rooms. Kitchen staff have claimed that food items move or fall without explanation.

Another story speaks of a young drowned boy whose spirit lingers near the bar, occasionally felt brushing against patrons' feet. Shadows, disembodied voices, and sudden temperature drops continue to fuel the restaurant's haunted reputation.

Edgewater Hotel

Room 413 at the Edgewater Hotel is frequently cited in guest accounts of paranormal activity. Hallway apparitions have been reported so often that some guests casually refer to them as "The Hallway Apparitions."

Stories also center on a tragic 1972 incident involving a seven-year-old girl who reportedly fell from an upper balcony into the Little Pigeon River. Her parents later died in a car crash under unclear circumstances. Guests have described seeing a young girl near the river pointing toward the hotel balcony.

Others report doors slamming, unexplained rushing water sounds, elevator malfunctions, flickering lights, cold spots, and sightings of a man in a dark suit walking the halls.

First United Methodist Church

The First United Methodist Church in Gatlinburg has also generated paranormal claims. Staff and visitors have reported shadowy figures moving through the sanctuary, silhouettes walking down aisles, and unexplained banging from the basement.

Footsteps have reportedly been heard upstairs when no one was present. Some accounts include sightings of priestly apparitions within the historic structure. Whether imagination or something more, the church's age and mountain setting contribute to the atmosphere.

UFOs and UAPs

The skies above Gatlinburg and the Smoky Mountains have not escaped mystery. Over the years, residents have reported strange lights, circular formations, and fast-moving objects in the night sky. While some sightings are later attributed to aircraft, balloons, or drones, others remain unexplained.

Videos periodically surface online, sparking local discussion about unidentified aerial phenomena in the region. Late-night observers often describe the lights as silent and deliberate, moving in ways that defy conventional aircraft patterns.

Bigfoot Sightings

The Great Smoky Mountains are also home to ongoing Bigfoot lore. Numerous anecdotal reports describe large, hairy figures seen in wooded areas and near rural roads. The Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO) lists multiple Class A sightings in Sevier County, where Gatlinburg is located.

While scientific proof remains lacking, the legend persists in local culture, complete with themed attractions and festivals. The Smokies have a way of reminding you that not everything in the woods is easily explained.

In Gatlinburg, the mountains hold their secrets close. Whether one believes in spirits, cryptids, or unidentified craft, the stories endure — and so do the witnesses. ◆

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When Presidents Talk Aliens

Soundbites, Secrecy & the UAP Paper Trail

By Cheryl Knight-Wilson

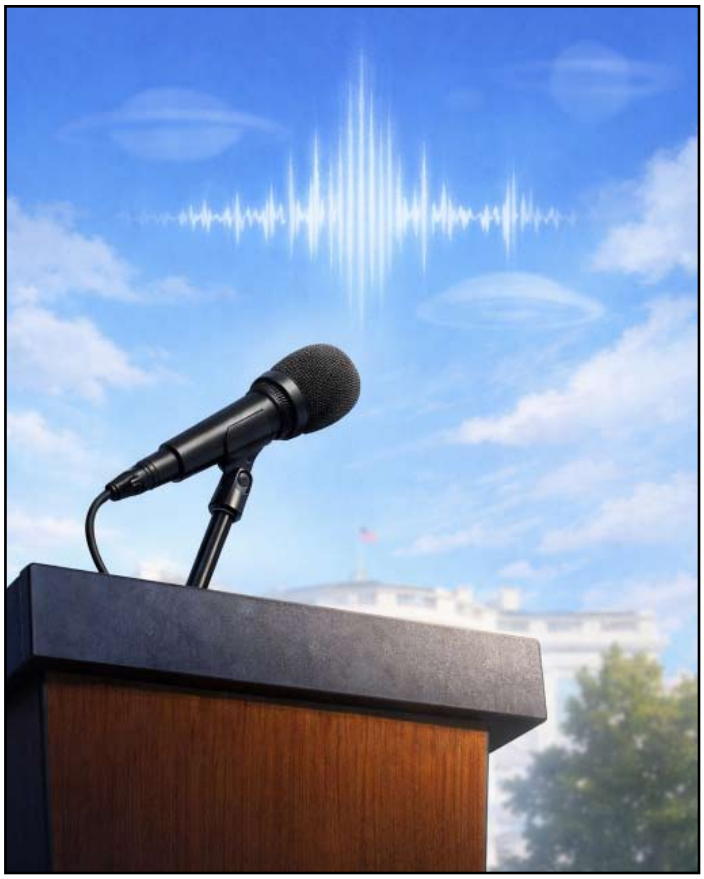
It started with a quick answer in a casual interview. Former U.S. President Barack Obama was asked about aliens, and his response — that they're "real" — was enough to send headlines spinning. Within hours, clips were circulating, stripped of context and loaded with implication.

What Obama actually appeared to mean was far less cinematic than the headlines implied. He wasn't hinting at secret briefings about crashed spacecraft. He wasn't suggesting the government is hiding bodies in a bunker. He was speaking to probability — the idea that, in a universe so vast it defies comprehension, it would be statistically surprising if Earth were the only place life ever emerged.

But nuance rarely trends.

Within days, the conversation shifted from what Obama meant to what the government knows. And almost on cue, federal officials reiterated that additional materials related to unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) would continue to be reviewed and released.

For many Americans, that sounded like confirmation that something big was brewing.



A Comment, Then a Promise

The timing felt cinematic: A former president says something that can be interpreted as validating extraterrestrial life, and the U.S. government responds by signaling more transparency around unexplained aerial sightings.

But in reality, the file releases didn't begin with that remark. The process has been underway for several years. Since 2020, agencies have publicly acknowledged investigating anomalous objects observed by military pilots and sensor systems. Declassified Navy videos showing fast-moving objects — difficult to explain, but not conclusively otherworldly — pushed the topic from conspiracy forums into congressional hearing rooms.

The establishment of the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office formalized what had once been a scattered effort. The office's mandate is straightforward: Collect reports, analyze data, and determine whether unidentified phenomena pose a national security risk. To date, official summaries have been clear about one thing: There is no verified evidence that any of the documented cases involve extraterrestrial technology. That statement hasn't stopped speculation. If anything, it's sharpened it.

Between Unidentified and Extraterrestrial

The gap between those two words — unidentified and extraterrestrial — is where most of the tension lives. Unidentified means the available data isn't sufficient to reach a conclusion. It can reflect equipment limitations, incomplete sensor coverage, environmental distortion, or simply a fleeting encounter that doesn't yield enough information. It does not automatically imply alien origin.

Yet, culturally, the word carries weight. For decades, "UFO" became shorthand for "alien spacecraft." The

→

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8:00 AM	CAFÉ OPEN FOR BREAKFAST, 8:30 REGISTRATION STARTS
9:00 AM	FRANK CHILLE- SELECTED BY EXTRATERRESTRIALS
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10:30 AM	BILL BIRNES- UFO HUNTERS BACK STORY
11:45 AM	CAFÉ OPEN FOR LUNCH
12:30 PM	JOE FOSTER- NUKES, NAVY, & UFOS
1:45 PM	BREAK
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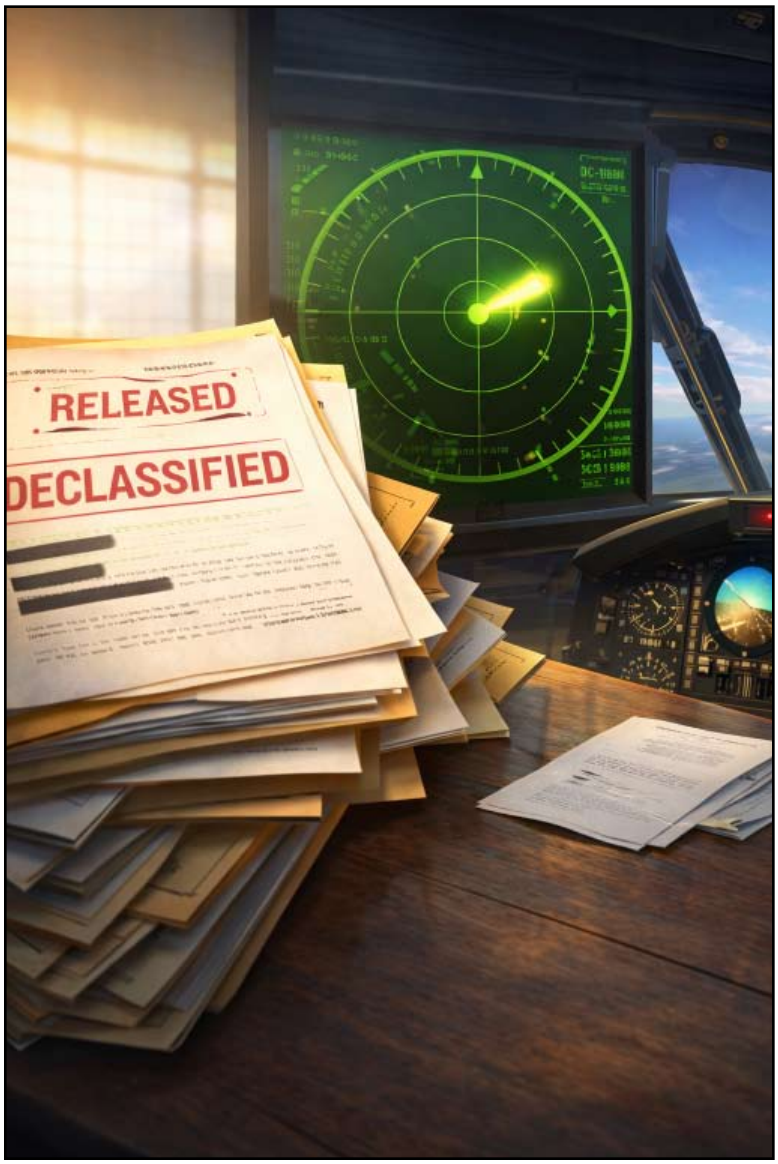

newer term, UAP, is more neutral, more technical — and deliberately so. It reframes the issue as an intelligence and safety matter rather than a science-fiction mystery.

That shift says something about how the government approaches the topic today. There is less mockery, less dismissal, and more bureaucratic language. Unknown objects in controlled airspace are treated as potential security concerns first and philosophical puzzles second.

Obama's remark landed in the middle of that evolution. In a different era, it might have been laughed off. Today, it feeds into a broader appetite for disclosure — or at least for clarity.

Why This Still Grips Us

There's a reason the story keeps resurfacing, even after official reports cool expectations. The question of extraterrestrial life is both scientific and deeply personal. If microbes exist on a distant moon, that's a milestone for biology. If intelligent life exists elsewhere in the cosmos, that reshapes humanity's sense of place in ways we're not entirely prepared for.

But most of the current discussion isn't about distant galaxies. It's about whether something is already here. That's a much more destabilizing idea.

Government transparency plays into that anxiety. Each promise of document review or file release is interpreted by some as a step toward revelation. But, historically, the documents tend to be procedural: pilot accounts, radar tracks, analysis memos, and conclusions that range from "likely drone" to "insufficient data."

There's no cinematic confession waiting at the bottom of the stack. At least, none that officials have acknowledged. And yet the public fascination persists. Part of that may be distrust. Institutions have not always been transparent about controversial topics, which leaves room for doubt. Part of it may be the human need for narrative. An unresolved mystery is more compelling than a closed case labeled "inconclusive."

Obama's words became a kind of cultural Rorschach test. Some heard scientific humility — an acknowledgment that we don't know everything. Others heard confirmation that powerful people are dancing around the truth.

The government's measured response — promising continued review and release of UAP materials — didn't settle the debate. It extended it.

Documentation Over Declaration

In the end, what we have is not proof of alien visitation, nor definitive debunking of every anomaly in the sky. We have a government that now openly tracks and reports on unexplained aerial phenomena, and a public that reads between every line.

That may be the real story.

We are in a moment where uncertainty is no longer dismissed, but documented. Where a former president can casually acknowledge the vastness of the Universe without triggering official denial. Where file releases are expected, not demanded through leaks.

It's less dramatic than a landing on the White House lawn. But it's more revealing in another way.

The question "Are we alone?" hasn't been answered. What has changed is how seriously it's allowed to be asked. And perhaps that — more than any viral soundbite — is what makes this moment worth paying attention to. ◆

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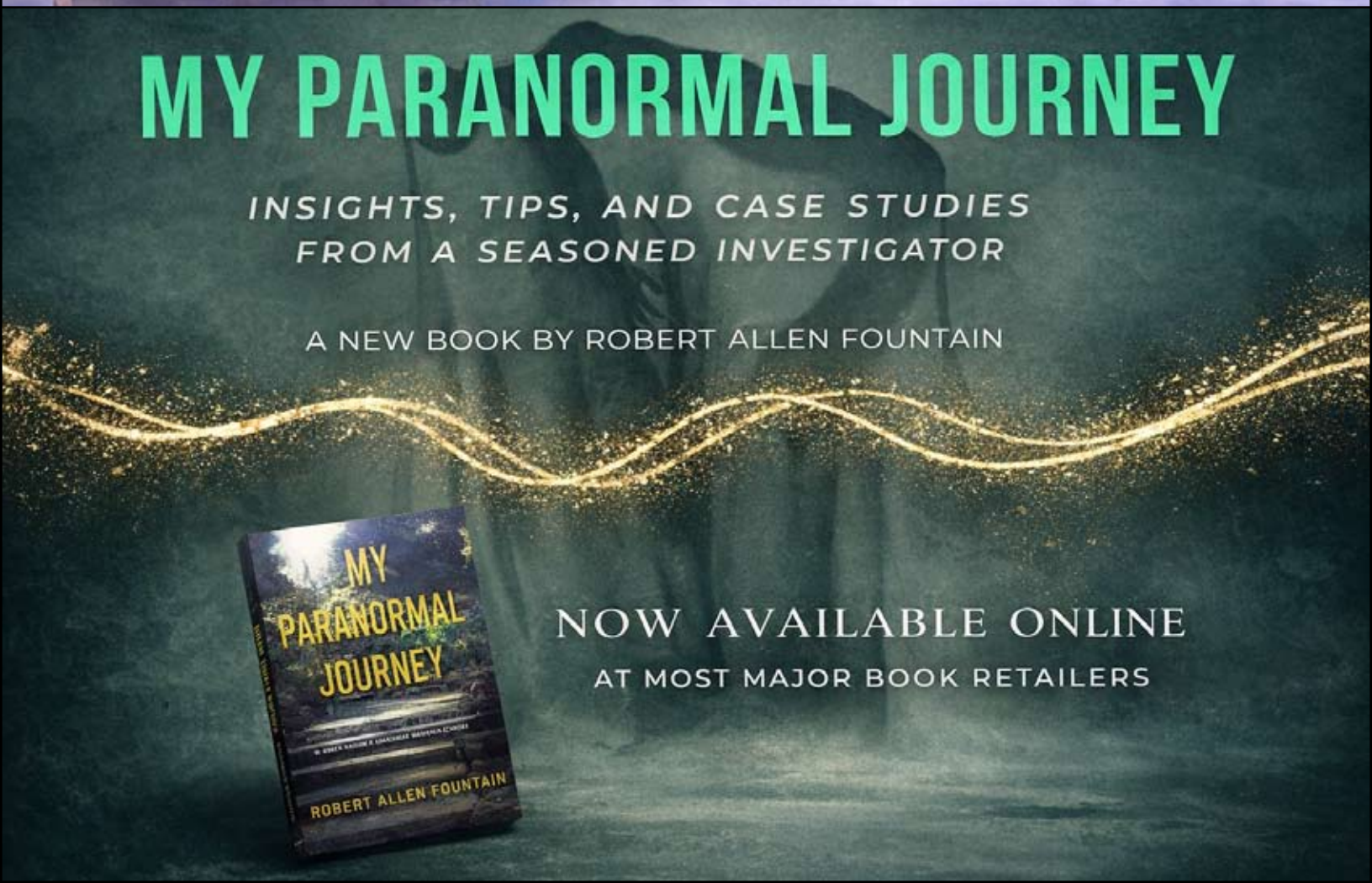
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MYTHICAL BEINGS
THAT STILL HAUNT OUR IMAGINATION

By Corey Sharer

Throughout human history, mythology has been a mirror reflecting our deepest fears, hopes, and imaginations. Across cultures, mythological creatures have embodied the mysteries of the unknown, often symbolizing forces of nature, morality, and transformation.

From Europe's fire-breathing dragons to Japan's elegant fox spirits, these beings continue to inspire art, literature, and film. Here are five of the most fascinating mythological creatures that have captured the world's imagination.

1. Dragon

Few creatures are as universally recognized as the dragon. In Western mythology, dragons are mighty, winged serpents that hoard treasure and breathe fire, often serving as symbols of chaos or greed. From the dragon slain by Saint George to Smaug in *The Hobbit*, they are formidable foes for heroes.

In contrast, Eastern dragons, especially in Chinese mythology, are revered as benevolent guardians of wisdom, rain, and prosperity. This duality — destructive yet divine — makes dragons enduring symbols of power and mystery across the world.

2. Phoenix

The phoenix represents renewal and immortality, rising from its own ashes in a blaze of fire. Originating in Egyptian and Greek myth, this radiant bird embodies the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth.

Its image appears throughout history — from the ancient city of Heliopolis to modern literature like *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. The phoenix's symbolism resonates deeply with humanity's quest for resilience and transformation, reminding us that destruction can lead to renewal.

3. Kitsune

In Japanese folklore, the kitsune is a shapeshifting fox spirit known for its intelligence and magical abilities.

Some tales describe the kitsune as mischievous tricksters, while others portray them as loyal guardians or lovers.

As foxes age, they grow more tails — up to nine — symbolizing their increasing power and wisdom. The kitsune's ability to blur the line between human and spirit realms reflects Japan's animistic traditions, where every being holds spiritual significance. Today, they remain a powerful symbol in both Shinto mythology and modern pop culture.

4. Griffin

Half lion, half eagle, the griffin combines the strength of the king of beasts with the majesty of the king of birds. In Greek and Persian mythology, griffins were protectors of divine treasures and symbols of vigilance. Their dual nature — earthly yet sky-bound — represents balance between physical and spiritual power.

Depicted in medieval coats of arms and architectural motifs, the griffin continues to embody nobility and guardianship, serving as an emblem of courage and leadership. In some legends, griffins were said to build nests of gold in remote mountains, fiercely guarding their hoards from intruders.

Their watchful presence at gates and sacred spaces reinforced the idea that great power must always be paired with responsibility.

Over time, they became enduring symbols of protection against both physical and moral threats.

5. Chimera

A monstrous hybrid with a lion's body, a goat's head, and a serpent's tail, the Chimera symbolizes chaos and unnatural fusion. Born from the monstrous union of Typhon and Echidna, it was eventually slain by the hero Bellerophon with the help of Pegasus.

The Chimera's terrifying form has made it a metaphor for impossible combinations and inner turmoil. Even today, the word "chimera" describes illusions or genetic hybrids, showing how deeply myth can influence language and science.

The Enduring Legacy of Myth

These mythological creatures continue to inspire our imagination because they personify timeless human themes — strength, transformation, balance, and the struggle between good and evil.

Whether feared, revered, or adored, they remind us that myths are not just old stories, but living symbols of our collective consciousness, bridging the gap between the human and the divine. ◆

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THE 1980 COUNCIL BLUFFS UFO ENCOUNTER

By Cheryl Lynn Carter

It was a brisk evening in Council Bluffs, Iowa, a town named for Council Bluff, where Lewis and Clark met with Otoe and Missouria leaders in August 1804.

On January 21, 1980, Marilyn Anderson and seven of her friends were enjoying their usual bridge game. They enjoyed getting together every two weeks because there wasn't much excitement in their town. By the time the game broke up it was approaching 11:30 p.m.

The seven women began driving home in two separate cars. As 37-year-old Marilyn Anderson proceeded north on county road G66, known to locals as Pioneer Trail, they observed a cluster of five flashing lights to their left in the western sky.

Marilyn focused on driving while her passengers watched. Rita Sobetski described the angular-shaped light cluster, hovering about 200-300 feet above the bluff less than a city block away, as being much larger than a full moon. As she continued to watch, it was clear that there were four square white lights and one flashing red light.

Marilyn decided to pull over so they could get out for a closer look. Fifty-year-old Jane, who had been following in her own car, pulled over behind her. However, when they got out of the car, 10 seconds later the lights sped away in a southwesterly direction.

Jane was curious as to why Marilyn had pulled over because she did not actually see anything. Marilyn walked back to her car and told her about the strange lights. After some discussion, the women came to the consensus that it might have been an aircraft. After all, they were not far from the Eppley Airfield.

Nonetheless, it was too cold to stand around and discuss it any further so the women got back into their respective vehicles and headed home. Jane waved goodbye and continued toward her home that was near the Iowa School for the Deaf.

At 11:40 p.m., she reached Longview Drive and pulled up to a stop sign. Suddenly, her car stalled and the radio and lights went out. She dismissed it as a gas line issue because it started up again on the first try.

As she continued on her way, about a quarter mile down the road, the night sky suddenly took on a pinkish-orange glow. Once again, the car stalled. It was then that she noticed a bright orange light in a cornfield to her left about 300 yards away.

It was so intense that it hurt her eyes. Something about it frightened her, so she got back into the vehicle where it was safe and locked the doors. As she watched, the light grew in intensity and seemed to surround the car.

The next thing she remembered was waking up. She discovered that her vehicle was now turned sideways across the road. How did that happen? She did not remember turning on the ignition. Would it even start again?

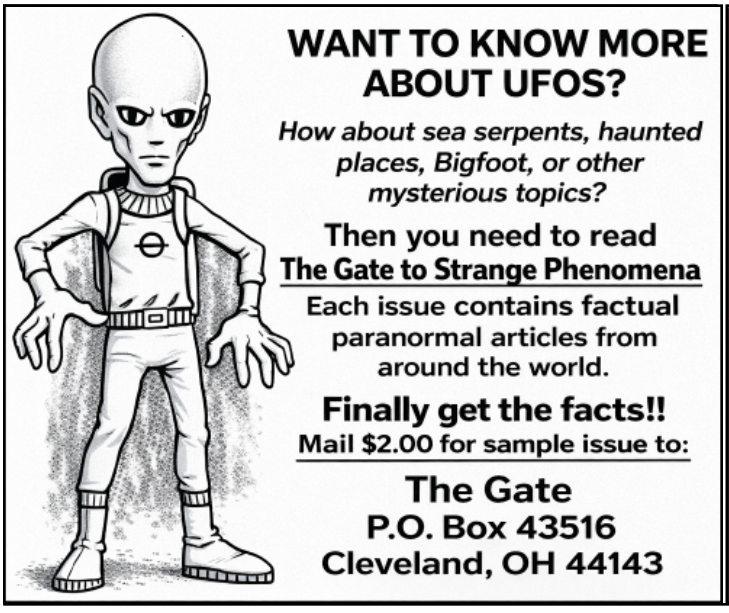
Upon turning the key, the engine started, and there were no more issues. The sky still had an orange glow, even though it was midnight. Once inside her house, she looked out the kitchen window and could still see the orange light in the distance.

Still quite shaken, Jane called her sister to explain that she had passed out and now noticed some blotches and redness on her skin. Her sister, being concerned, advised her to go see the doctor. She didn't want to wake her husband at that hour, so she waited.

The entire incident was so upsetting that she stayed awake all night. The orange glow in the sky finally dissipated. She noticed the blotches and redness were fading, and by 4:20 a.m. they were completely gone.

Jane never wanted any publicity involving her encounter. But Marilyn finally coaxed her into doing an interview with a reporter from the *Omaha World-Herald*. She complied, but asked that her name not be published.

The January 21, 1980, sighting has since been referenced in UFO case summaries and regional incident listings, where it remains a detailed multi-witness reports from the Council Bluffs area. ◆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The Orb in the Nursery

By Anonymous

This story still feels strange every time I tell it. Not dramatic-strange. Not horror-movie strange. Just deeply unexplainable.

My daughter was a baby then. I would sometimes sleep in her room — me in a small bed against the wall, her in her crib a few feet away. The house already had a history of odd activity, things that made you pause but not usually panic. I was used to that atmosphere. This, though, was something entirely different.

One night I woke up for no obvious reason. The room was still. And hovering over her crib was a small orb of light — about the size of a tiny ball. It wasn't blinding or flashy. It had a soft glow and a gentle pulse, almost like it had its own rhythm. It just hovered there, steady and calm.

And here's what stands out: I didn't feel afraid. I felt alert. Curious. Almost peaceful.

I watched it for what felt like a stretch of time — seconds, maybe minutes. Then something shifted. I can't explain how, but I knew it noticed me. The moment that awareness clicked, it reacted.

It shot straight toward me. There was no hesitation. Just direct, fast movement.

And then everything went black.

The next thing I knew, it was morning. Sunlight coming through the curtains. My daughter stirring. I woke up as if I'd slept through the night, except I hadn't. There was this lingering sense that something MORE had happened — something I wasn't allowed to fully remember.

I tried to rationalize it. Exhaustion. A vivid dream. Some kind of half-asleep hallucination. Being a new mom can mess with your sleep cycles in ways people don't talk about enough.

But it happened again.

And again.

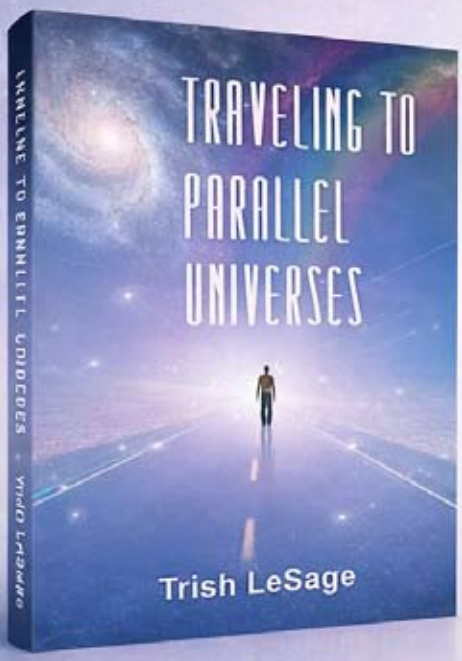
A few more times over the following weeks, I'd wake up to that same softly pulsating orb above her crib. Every time, the pattern repeated: I'd watch it. It would "realize" I was watching. It would dart toward me. And I'd wake up in the morning.

What's strange is that I never sensed danger. Not

once. No heaviness. No dread. If anything, the feeling in the room was calm — protective, even. The orb never seemed interested in me until I interrupted it. It felt focused on her.

Eventually, I decided to sleep in the next room. Not because I was scared, but because it felt like I was stepping into something I didn't fully understand.

I still don't know what it was. But I do know it was paranormal — something or someone watching over my child. I can't prove anything. I can only tell you how it felt. And it felt like protection. ◆



What if reality isn't singular?

Exploring the lived experience of parallel universes and multidimensional awareness

Because of a shift toward higher consciousness, many people are beginning to experience their true multidimensional nature— and to question the limits of the physical world as we understand it.

Traveling To Parallel Universes explores firsthand accounts of reality shifts, including the disappearance and reappearance of objects, teleportation, bilocation, and encounters with parallel realities. Alongside these experiences, the book examines scientific research that invites readers to reconsider how reality itself may function.

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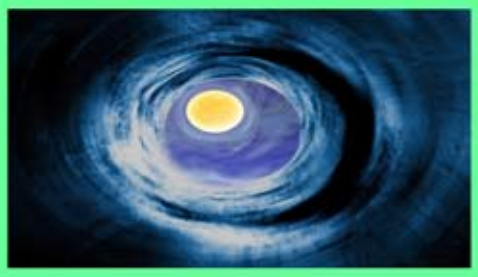

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Paranormal Theories That Refuse to Die

From the Staff of Paranormal Underground

The paranormal world doesn't just run on ghost stories — it runs on explanations. Over the decades, certain theories have surfaced, faded, been challenged, and then resurfaced again, often stronger than before.

They linger in podcasts, investigations, late-night debates, and conference hallways. Some are rooted in folklore. Others lean toward physics. All of them have one thing in common: They simply won't go away.

Here are five of the most enduring paranormal theories — the ones investigators still circle back to time and again.

1. Stone Tape Theory

First introduced in the 1970s through a British television drama, Stone Tape Theory proposes that emotional or traumatic events can somehow be "recorded" into the fabric of a building — particularly stone — and later replayed under the right conditions.

According to the theory, hauntings aren't spirits at all. They're environmental recordings. The footsteps heard on a staircase. The woman seen crossing a hallway at the same time each night. The sounds repeat because they are imprinted, not interactive.

Critics point out there's no scientific evidence that stone records emotional energy like a hard drive. Supporters counter that we once didn't understand how radio waves moved invisibly through the air either. What keeps this theory alive is how neatly it explains residual hauntings — especially those with no apparent intelligence behind them.

And if we're being honest, it's a neat explanation. No demons. No portals. Just the past leaving its fingerprints behind.

2. Residual Hauntings

Closely related to Stone Tape Theory, residual haunting suggests that some paranormal activity isn't a spirit at all, but more like a replay loop. These are the hauntings that don't respond to questions. They don't deviate or acknowledge the living. A figure appears, walks a path, vanishes. Over and over.

Investigators often separate hauntings into two camps: intelligent and residual. The residual category offers comfort to skeptics and believers alike because it removes intent. No trapped soul. No conscious presence. Just energy repeating itself.

The problem? No one can define what that energy

actually is. Emotional residue? Environmental anomaly? Collective expectation shaping perception?

Still, residual hauntings remain one of the most widely accepted explanations in paranormal circles because they match so many case patterns.

3. Demonic Attachment

Few theories ignite debate faster than demonic attachment. Rooted in religious tradition — particularly within Christianity — this theory holds that certain entities are not human spirits but malevolent nonhuman forces capable of attaching to individuals or locations. Signs often cited include personality shifts, aggression, oppression, scratches, or disturbances that escalate over time.

Skeptics argue that many so-called attachment cases overlap with mental health crises, trauma responses, or environmental stress. Even within paranormal investigation communities, there's disagreement about how quickly the "demonic" label gets applied.

Yet the theory persists because some cases defy easy categorization. Patterns of escalation, multiple witnesses, and physical effects keep this idea circulating. It taps into something primal — the fear that not everything unseen is neutral.

Whether interpreted spiritually or psychologically, demonic attachment remains one of the most emotionally charged frameworks in the field.

4. The Simulation Hypothesis

Unlike the others, this one didn't begin in paranormal circles.

The Simulation Hypothesis, popularized in modern philosophy and tech culture, suggests our reality may be a highly advanced simulation. If that's the case, paranormal events could be glitches — anomalies in the code.

Shadow figures become rendering errors. Déjà vu becomes system lag. Apparitions become corrupted data. It's speculative, yes. But it reframes the paranormal in a technological context rather than a spiritual one.

What makes this theory sticky is its compatibility with both science fiction and theoretical physics discussions. It allows skeptics to entertain strange experiences without invoking spirits. It allows believers to reinterpret hauntings without abandoning mystery.

It also feels distinctly modern — a 21st-century update to ancient metaphysical questions.

5. The Collective Consciousness Theory

This theory proposes that paranormal phenomena may arise from shared human belief itself. In other words, we might be co-creating the experiences.

The idea draws from psychology, Jungian archetypes and even quantum speculation. If enough people believe in a type of entity — shadow figures, hat men, certain archetypal spirits — could that belief shape perception in consistent ways?

Some extend this further: that intense emotion, trauma or expectation can externalize into phenomena. Not necessarily as a ghost — but as an experience.

It's a controversial view because it challenges both hard skeptics and strict spiritualists. But it refuses to disappear because it bridges the gap between mind and mystery.

Why These Theories Endure

None of these explanations are universally accepted. All of them have holes. And yet they continue to circulate in investigations, documentaries, and conversations because they attempt to answer a stubborn question: What are we actually experiencing?

Maybe the reason these theories won't die is simple. The phenomena haven't gone away either.

Until they do, we'll keep reaching for frameworks — ancient, modern, and everything in between — trying to make sense of the shadows at the edge of the room. ◆

The Veil of Forgetting

Why Souls Forget Between Lives

By Chad Wilson

If reincarnation is real, why don't we remember our past lives? It is one of the most enduring questions in metaphysical philosophy.

Across civilizations and spiritual traditions, the idea persists that human beings do not begin life as blank slates. Instead, we may arrive carrying an unseen history — impressions, lessons, unfinished threads. Yet if such continuity exists, it appears concealed. Many traditions describe a kind of spiritual amnesia, often referred to as the "Veil of Forgetting," that ensures each lifetime begins without conscious recall of what came before.

The question is not simply whether reincarnation is true. The deeper philosophical puzzle is this: If continuity exists, why would forgetting be built into the system at all?

Ancient Philosophies of Forgetting

The idea that souls forget is not a modern invention. It stretches back thousands of years into the foundations of Western and Eastern thought.

In the dialogues "Meno" and "Phaedo," Plato introduced the concept of anamnesis — the notion that learning is actually remembering. He proposed that the soul exists prior to birth and possesses knowledge of eternal truths. Birth, therefore, involves a kind of forgetting. Education becomes recollection. Although Plato did not describe a literal veil, his framework suggests that incarnation entails amnesia. Conscious awareness narrows as the soul enters material existence.

In Hindu philosophy, particularly within Vedanta, forgetting is explained through the principle of maya — the illusion that obscures ultimate reality. The individual soul, or Atman, is understood to be identical with Brahman, the universal consciousness. Yet this unity is hidden by ignorance, known as avidya. Spiritual awakening is not the acquisition of something new, but the removal of distortion. Forgetting is not accidental; it is woven into the cosmic structure.

Buddhist cosmology offers a different nuance. In classical Buddhist thought, there is no eternal soul that passes intact from life to life. Instead, rebirth is driven by karmic continuity — causal momentum without a fixed identity.

Personal memory dissolves at death, but karmic imprints persist. What continues is pattern rather than personality.

Across these traditions, forgetting is not portrayed as a malfunction. It is intrinsic to incarnation. Awareness contracts. Identity resets. Continuity exists beneath the surface, but conscious memory does not travel forward.

The Veil in Esoteric and Modern Thought

The specific phrase "Veil of Forgetting" gained popularity in the 19th century through Theosophy and Western esoteric movements. Helena Blavatsky and later writers suggested that souls pass deliberately through a veil before incarnating. The veil serves a purpose: it preserves the authenticity of earthly experience.

If you remembered every lifetime — every love, betrayal, failure and triumph — would this life feel immediate? Would relationships carry the same intensity? Would grief feel fresh, or would it be diluted by accumulated perspective? Many esoteric teachers suggest that forgetting protects immersion. Each life must feel real in order to matter.

Some argue that the veil safeguards psychological stability. A human nervous system may not be equipped to process centuries of lived experience. Forgetting becomes a mercy rather than a deprivation.

Others describe it as a mechanism for growth. If karma were consciously remembered, moral development might become strategic rather than sincere. Instead of acting authentically, individuals might attempt to optimize outcomes based on remembered cosmic accounting. In this interpretation, the veil enforces emotional honesty.

Not all interpretations are benevolent. Certain contemporary spiritual subcultures portray the veil as imposed — a barrier designed to keep souls trapped in cycles of rebirth. These narratives echo strands of ancient Gnostic symbolism, in which the material world is seen as a kind of confinement. However, historically grounded traditions more often describe forgetting as inherent to incarnation rather than maliciously engineered. Whether protective or imposed, the veil functions as an explanation for the gap between spiritual continuity and lived ignorance.

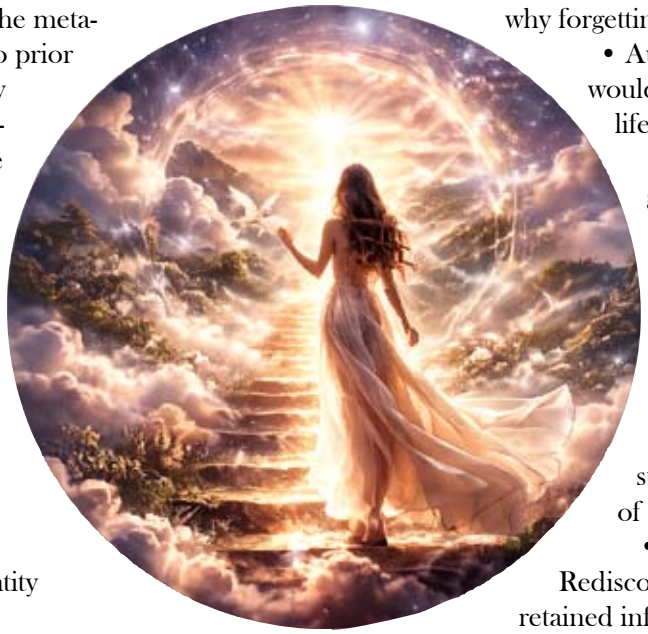
Psychological and Near-Death Perspectives

Outside explicitly spiritual systems, the veil can be understood metaphorically. Carl Jung proposed the concept of the collective unconscious — a shared reservoir of archetypes and symbolic structures inherited across humanity. While Jung did not advocate literal reincarnation, he acknowledged that aspects of psyche can feel older than the individual lifespan. What some interpret as past-life memory could reflect archetypal imagery emerging from deep psychic layers.

→

Modern neuroscience also reinforces the idea that forgetting is structurally embedded in consciousness. Memory is not a static archive. It is reconstructive and selective. Entire periods of early childhood are inaccessible to most adults. Traumatic experiences can be fragmented or sealed off entirely. Forgetting is often protective.

If the mind can restrict access to overwhelming material within a single lifetime, the metaphor of a soul restricting access to prior lifetimes becomes psychologically intuitive. The architecture of concealment mirrors the architecture of cognition.



Near-death experiences add another layer to the discussion. Researchers such as Raymond Moody and Bruce Greyson have documented accounts of individuals who report expanded awareness during clinical death. Some describe panoramic life reviews. Others speak of a sudden sense of total remembering — as if a larger identity briefly reemerges.

Interpretations vary. Skeptics point to neurochemical shifts, oxygen deprivation or stress responses in the brain. Yet one recurring feature is striking: experiencers often describe the sensation as remembering rather than discovering. The language of return appears more frequently than the language of novelty.

For spiritual thinkers, such experiences represent a temporary lifting of the veil. For psychologists, they reveal how profoundly consciousness can reorganize under extreme conditions. Either way, the motif of concealed knowledge resurfacing remains consistent.

Identity, Continuity and the Meaning of Forgetting

The most challenging philosophical question may be this: If you cannot remember a previous life, in what sense are you the same being?

John Locke proposed that personal identity is rooted in memory. If you cannot recall performing an action, you are not the same moral agent who performed it. Reincarnation complicates this view. It suggests continuity without conscious recall.

Many spiritual traditions resolve this tension by distinguishing between personality and essence. Personality — preferences, memories, narrative identity — dissolves at death. Essence persists. What carries forward are tendencies, affinities, fears and latent talents rather than detailed recollections.

This layered model reframes forgetting not as erasure but as narrowing. Identity becomes structured limitation. The narrative self-resets, but underlying patterns remain.

Within metaphysical systems that support reincarnation, several recurring explanations are offered for why forgetting might be necessary:

- Authentic experience: Memory would compromise immersion; each life must feel immediate and real.
- Emotional freshness: Love, grief and hope carry intensity precisely because they are not diluted by accumulated awareness.
- Karmic neutrality: Remembered grievances or debts could overwhelm growth.
- Psychological integration: The brain may not be structured to integrate centuries of lived experience.
- Evolution of consciousness: Rediscovery deepens insight more than retained information.

Interestingly, these explanations parallel developmental psychology. A child does not remember infancy in detail, yet infancy shapes the adult. Identity requires selective forgetting. Continuity does not demand constant awareness.

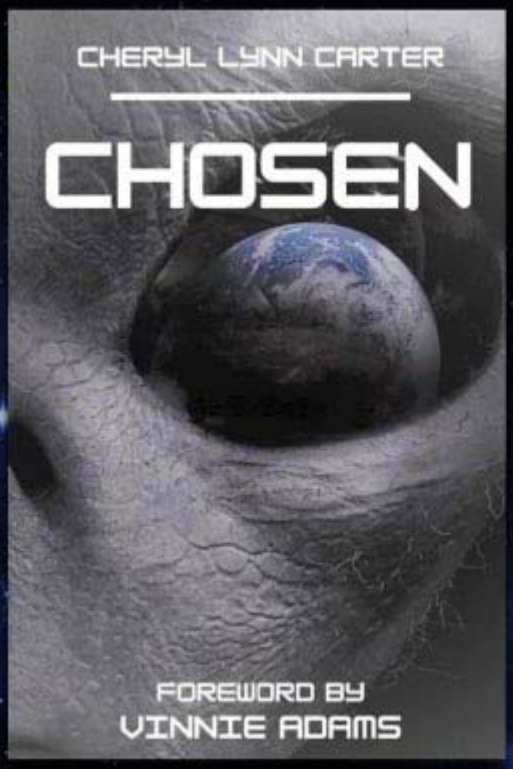
The appeal of the veil may lie in the tension it resolves. If humans are eternal, why do we feel finite? If consciousness evolves, why does growth feel difficult? The veil allows both continuity and struggle to coexist. It explains limitation without denying transcendence.

From a critical standpoint, there is no empirical confirmation that souls forget between lives. The existence of souls themselves remains a metaphysical proposition rather than a scientific conclusion.

Yet the metaphor of the veil aligns closely with observable features of consciousness. We forget dreams within minutes. We lose access to early childhood memory. We reinterpret our own histories as identity evolves. Forgetting appears intrinsic to awareness.

Perhaps that is why the idea endures. It frames limitation not as failure but as design. It suggests that mystery is not evidence of absence, but structure.

Whether understood literally or symbolically, the Veil of Forgetting proposes something provocative: that the purpose of life may not be to remember everything — but to rediscover meaning, again and again, as if for the first time. ◆



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RENDLESHAM FOREST

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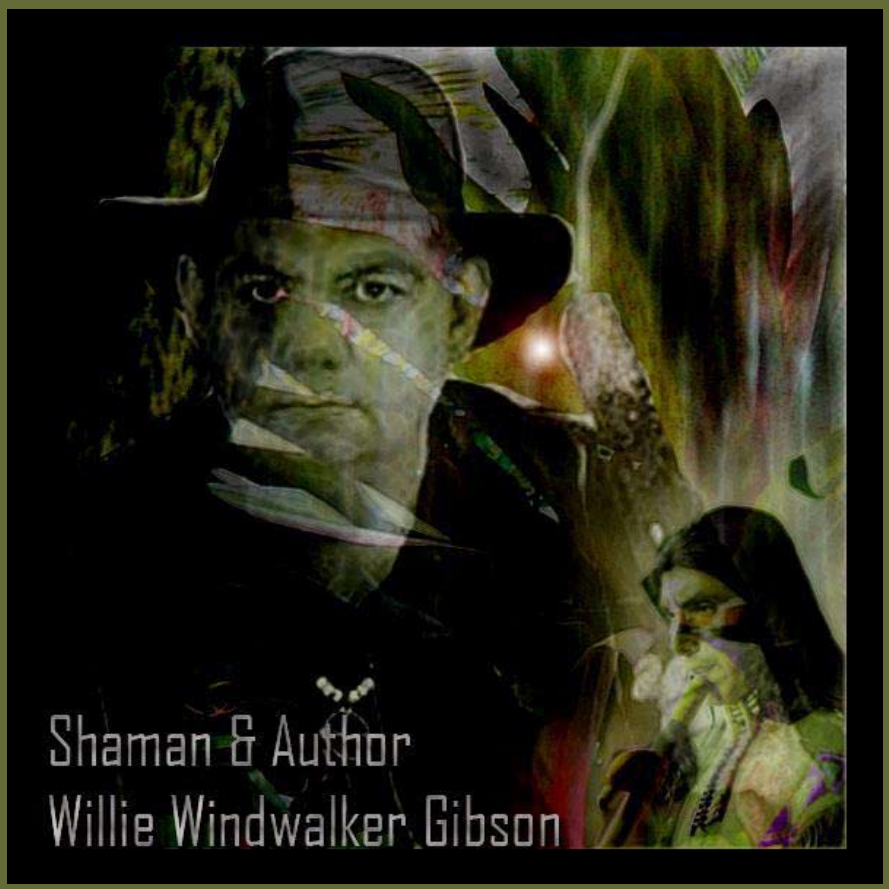

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‘I LOVE YOU FOREVER AND EVER’

By Willie Windwalker Gibson

For the past few years, I have written stories about my adventures in the supernatural. For 37 of those years, I had the love of my life beside me, my wife Schmon. It didn’t matter what we ran into, she stood beside me and fought whatever it was. Schmon had the warrior within; she never was afraid as long as we were together.

During the past 15 years, Schmon’s health started to deteriorate, from breaking bones to diabetes to lupus, she fought it. She was in and out of the hospital 20 times, always me by her side. I never left her. I was with her 24/7 and slept in a chair by her bed. I always was able to pull her through and brought her home. Throughout this we always said to each other, “ I love you always and forever.” Every day for 37 years we said that and we meant it.

We would sit for hours and talk about what would happen when one of us died. I didn’t like to talk about it, but Schmon insisted we needed to. One morning, we were sitting having coffee at the kitchen table, and she reached over, took my hand, and said, “Willie, I want you to listen to me and make me three promises.” I told her I would.

She said, “The first promise, baby, I want to die in my own bed with you by my side.” I told her I would.

“2nd promise, I want to be buried in my wedding dress with my wedding rings on.” I told her I would.

“The 3rd promise, Willie when my mom died, us kids split up. Please keep my babies together. Tell them my blood is their blood. Tell them I will be with them through good times and bad times. I will be with them for birthdays, holidays, I’ll be with them. Tell them I will love them always and forever.” I told her I would.

A few months went by. Schmon’s health started to get more grave. Hospice was called into our home. The next week I was at Schmon’s bedside. She was breathing hard trying to stay with me. I told her, “Baby I’m here.” With that, she stopped breathing. I took her in my arms and she let out one final breath, going limp in my arms. I fulfilled the first promise. I was there and holding her.

A few days went by and I went and found Schmon’s wedding dress. I found it in a bag. I took it out to look at it, and pieces of paper fell out. I looked at the pieces of paper and saw that names were on them — one was for me, the others for the kids and grandkids. I read my paper; it was a goodbye letter.

I looked up and said, “OK baby, I get it.”

My stepdaughter had bought a dress for Schmon to be buried in. I told Schmon I would make sure she would be buried with her dress.

A few days later before Bishop James Long started her funeral, I got up and relayed Schmon’s message to her kids to stay together. I gave them their pieces of paper from their mom.

The Bishop did her service, and after the service was over, I took Schmon’s wedding dress and placed it over her. Her rings were placed on her fingers, and I put my wedding ring on a chain and placed it around her neck. I bent over, kissed her on her lips. I told her, “You will be the only Mrs. Willie Gibson. I love you forever and ever.”

The funeral director asked me if I wanted to shut the casket lid. I told him yes. I kissed her again, and I said, “I love you forever and ever,” and I closed the lid.

We took Schmon to the cemetery, and I watched her casket be lowered into the ground. I realized it wasn’t the end, but a new spiritual beginning for us both.

Schmon, I love you forever and ever. ◆

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